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POLICY PLANNING STAFF

174th meeting

Thursday, May 6, 1948
9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Present: George Kennan, George Butler, John Davies, Bernard Gufler, Carlton Savage, Henry Villard

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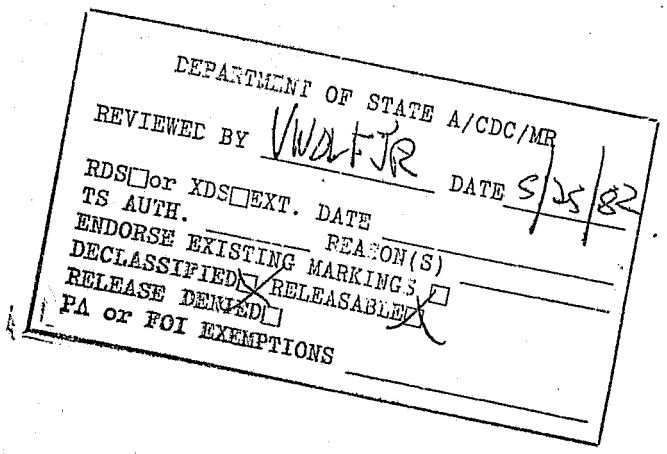
Gordon Mattison, NE

Mr. Mattison gave the Policy Planning Staff a briefing on the current situation in Palestine. His remarks are summarized in the attached memorandum.



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May 6, 1948

PRESENTATION OF THE PALESTINE SITUATION

In a discussion of the Palestine situation before members of the Policy Planning Staff, Mr. Gordon Mattison of NE brought out the following points:

1. Our main efforts are now directed toward obtaining a truce, both for the City of Jerusalem and for Palestine as a whole. We are working through the UN, with a Truce Commission in Palestine and with the Trusteeship Council in New York. In addition to a three-months general truce, we are seeking to obtain a cease-fire arrangement on an emergency ten-day basis.

2. The main obstacle to truce discussions is the question of immigration. The Jews wish 4,000 immigrants a month, while the Arabs are unwilling to accept more than 1500 as under the British regulations. The chances of agreement are not promising.

3. Jewish forces are probably strong enough to hold the Jewish area provided by partition and now in their possession. The Jews will probably proclaim a Jewish state for this area when the British withdraw on May 15, and will probably seek international recognition.

4. Since there is no indication that the Arabs will agree to a Jewish state, the area will become a festering sore for an indefinite length of time.

5. No Arab forces have yet crossed the boundaries of Palestine, except for some irregulars. King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan is the leader of Arab military opposition and will probably try to hold at least the Arab area as provided by partition. The British are reported to be endeavoring to restrain Abdullah from military action.

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6. While the Arabs are not likely to accept any arrangement agreed to by the Jews, there is some hope that Arab "acquiescence" may be obtained for some truce agreement. The most effective way of bringing about a truce would be for the UN order to that effect.

7. There is a possibility that the Soviet Government might grant recognition to a Jewish state, since the Russians have consistently supported partition.

Other questions discussed included: (1) lifting of the arms embargo; (2) the economic and financial difficulties for a Zionist state; (3) the threat to the Middle East oil supply; (4) possible sanctions by the UN in the event of Arab "aggression", probably followed by Arab withdrawal from the UN; (5) exploitation of the situation by the Russians; (6) the British attitude in the present situation.

It was agreed that in view of the probable failure to reach a solution by May 15, a serious explosion would take place immediately after May 15.

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